

E1-1174



PLEASURE DRIVEWAY and PARK DISTRICT of PEORIA, ILLINOIS

Glen Oak Park Administrative Offices • 2218 N. Prospect Road
Peoria, IL 61603 • Phone (309) 682-1200 • Fax (309) 686-3352

September 23, 2003

Mr. Kevin M. Seals
Project Manager
Hanson Professional Services, Inc.
1525 South Sixth Street
Springfield, Illinois 62703

RE: STB Finance Docket 34395 and Docket No. AB-858X
City of Peoria, Illinois, d.b.a. Peoria, Peoria Heights and
Western Railroad-Construction, Exemption and Abandonment
Exemption-in Peoria County, Illinois

Request for Comments/Consultation on Proposed Construction
of 1,800 ft of Connecting Track and Abandonment of 7.5 miles
of Existing Track in Peoria County, Illinois
Hanson No. 02P2007

Dear Mr. Seals:

The proposed construction of 1,800 feet of new rail line will connect the Union Pacific Railroad to the recently acquired 1.9 mile length of railroad spur to the northern customers along the existing Keller Branch. The proposed abandonment and railbanking of approximately 7.5 miles of the Keller Branch south of Pioneer Parkway will allow the Peoria Park District, in partnership with the City of Peoria and the Village of Peoria Heights, to construct a 7.5 mile shared use urban bikeway. The proposed bikeway will connect the 26 mile Illinois Department of Natural Resources' Rock Island Bicycle Trail with the completed downtown Peoria portion of the Rock Island/Pimiteoui Bicycle Trail. The completed downtown portion is already in position to link to shared bicycle trail segments on the east side of the Illinois River. Communities served by the proposed completed trail system include Toulon, Wyoming, Princeville, Dunlap, Peoria Heights, and Peoria located west of the Illinois River. Communities on the east side that would eventually be connected include Washington, East Peoria, Morton, and Pekin. The completed project will be the only non-motorized vehicular transportation means between these communities and provide over eighty-three miles of shared use bicycle trail in Peoria, Tazewell and Woodford Counties.

In addition to the Peoria Park District's interest and commitment in building and maintaining the proposed urban bicycle trail, the Illinois Department's of Transportation and Natural Resources have granted separate state and federal dollars for the construction of the local trail system. The Peoria Park District has secured local match dollars and has intergovernmental agreements with the City of Peoria and the Village of Peoria Heights to build and maintain the proposed bicycle trail. The shared use trail is part of the Peoria Park District's Master Plan, the

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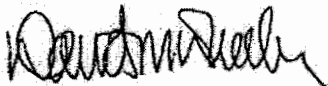
BONNIE W. NOBLE - Director of Parks and Recreation

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City of Peoria's Comprehensive Plan and the Heartland Riverfront Master Plan. The proposed improvement is also consistent with the Illinois State Trails Plan and the Illinois SCORP plan. The project is endorsed by all sponsors, the Regional Trail Advisory Task Force, The Illinois Valley Wheelmen, Greater Peoria Transit District, Illinois Department of Transportation, CILCO / Ameren, Peoria School District 150 and State and Federal legislators. In total, over \$11,000,000 in federal, state and local dollars have been appropriated for portions of the bicycle trail and Illinois River crossing. The Peoria Park District and its consultants have nearly completed the engineering of the proposed trail. At risk is nearly \$3,800,000 in appropriated federal, state and local dollars for construction if the Kellar Branch is not railbanked.

The benefit of the proposed trail is this trail will connect to other trails in the Peoria metropolitan area resulting in over eighty miles of continuous bicycle trail. This trail system will connect homes, businesses, parks, schools, restaurants, shopping, historic attractions and major employment centers. The improvement will create a safer environment for bicyclists and pedestrians and provide an alternative mode of transportation. The proposed trail will link neighborhoods currently separated by high traffic volume highways (I #74, IL #6, IL #24, IL #29, IL #40 and US #150).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Wheeler", written over a horizontal line.

David Wheeler,
Administrative Assistant